

ASHLAND

Light Up the Tracks

Population: approx. 7500



What: Describe the form and function of the event. What types of activities take place and what happens at the event?

Ashland Main Street's "Light Up the Tracks" promotion is designed to attract visitors to the downtown to view the businesses and residences along the railroad tracks that are festively illuminated with holiday lights, then stay and patronize our shops and restaurants.

Light Up the Tracks officially kicks off with a *Grand Illumination* event in which the mayor performs a countdown, and an official Holiday Tree is illuminated along with the buildings on Railroad Avenue. Following the *Grand Illumination*, the crowd moves into the many shops and restaurants along the tracks.

Who: Who is the event for --who participates? Who typically attends and how many?

The kickoff draws about 5000 people, but the real intent of Light Up the Tracks is to continue to draw visitors to Ashland throughout the holiday season. In order to encourage visitors to patronize downtown businesses, we initiated a "Gingerbread Train Scavenger Hunt," with businesses making elaborate train-related gingerbread exhibits. Main Street printed up scavenger hunt cards and a raffle box with entry forms was placed at each location. On January 2nd when the promotion ended, we pulled a random entry form from the hundreds collected and awarded the winner a \$50 Ashland Gift Certificate.

When: When is the event? How and why was this date chosen and important?

The promotion lasts from the first Saturday in December through New Year's Day. The previous week is Small Business Saturday, so the event is an extension of the holiday shopping season.

Where: Where is the event held? Is it within the district? If not, how is the district impacted or benefited?

The event kicks off in our downtown district at the Hanover Arts and Activities Center. The Holiday Tree is located at our key downtown intersection, Railroad Avenue and England Street.

Why: Why is this event important or strategic to the community, the organization, and/or participants?

The 2016 event brought national press and record numbers of visitors to downtown Ashland, with businesses reporting their best holiday shopping season in years. Ashland was listed on the *Tacky Lights Tour* in the Richmond Times-Dispatch, bringing visitors/shoppers from all over Central Virginia. Local TV stations covered the visually-stunning story and were encouraged to provide footage to their national affiliates. A Washington Post reporter came down to Ashland on the Amtrak train so she could witness the display and passenger reactions. The story made the front page of the Sunday Lifestyle section and was distributed on the Washington Post Online news feed, potentially reaching 20 million readers.

How: Describe partnerships and logistics considerations. Describe any sponsorships, budget and planning efforts.

Planning for the promotion begins in July/August time frame. The kickoff event involves more than 200 volunteers from several local organizations. James River Nursery sponsors the event, which costs about \$5000, mostly to cover the cost of hanging holiday lights.

ST. PAUL

Clinch River Days Festival



Population: *1,010 within the corporate limits, which is in both Wise and Russell counties and is intersected by the Clinch River. The rural areas around the town are considered part of our community as those residents support the businesses and school in St. Paul.*

What: Describe the form and function of the event. What types of activities take place and what happens at the event?

The Clinch River Days festival is held each year to showcase our beautiful world-renowned Clinch River, outdoor recreation venues, magnificent mountain vistas, and our proud Appalachian heritage. Entertainment for all tastes and ages; craft and food vendors, educational exhibits; local wine and craft beer; featured visual artist/show; juried photography show; river/environmental activities to include canoe/kayak/tubing, the mussel nursery with Team Estonoa, caving; 5K Race, wrestling match; dog show; car show; dance contest; Orchestral/Blue Grass/Country/Rock & Roll/New Age/Blues/Americana music performers; living history re-enactments; and Kid's Day activities with a fishing tournament, magician, storytelling, amusement rides, games.

Who: Who is the event for --who participates? Who typically attends and how many?

Families from the region come to our festival for a weekend of fun and free entertainment. We estimate 5,000-6,000 in attendance.

When: When is the event? How and why was this date chosen and important?

The festival is held the weekend after Memorial Day. The date was chosen for the first festival in 1999 because no other area festivals or events were held on that weekend. Now, events begin on Thursday evening and end on Saturday night.

Where: Where is the event held? Is it within the district? If not, how is the district impacted or benefited?

Activities are held on the banks of the Clinch in A.R. Matthews Memorial Park (outside district) and in downtown, which is a five-minute walk.

Inside the district: +Thursday evening -The Historic N&W Conductor's House hosts an Art Show, reception, and Heart of Appalachia Orchestra concert; +Thursday to Saturday - Photography Contest/Show in Fraley Building; +Saturday – Farmers Market; Car Show

There is an increase in foot traffic, especially during the car show, but only affects restaurants.

Why: Why is this event important or strategic to the community, the organization, and/or participants?

The Festival was created as an event to promote nature-based tourism, a strategy in the Strategic Plan, published in 2000 by St. Paul Tomorrow, Inc. Nature-based tourism is still a goal in the updated 2017 Plan. The Clinch is the most bio-diverse river in North America and is our crowning jewel. Downtown revitalization is working and is greatly influenced by our environmental assets.

How: Describe partnerships and logistics considerations. Describe any sponsorships, budget and planning efforts.

We rely on corporate sponsors, Town, and county governments for funding, plus our loyal volunteers to make this a quality event for the entire region. Event planning is for a full year and operates with a budget of \$20,000.

FRANKLIN

We Be Jammin

Population: approx. 8,500



What: Describe the form and function of the event. What types of activities take place and what happens at the event?

- Summer Concert Series with live music performed by local and region bands.
- Free admission to the public
- Food Vendor from the DFA concession Building with reasonable pricing (hamburgers, hotdogs, chicken tenders, cheese sticks, French Fries, Philly Cheese Steaks, sodas and water, etc.)
- Ice Cream vendor
- Adult beverages (beer, wine, Ritas, etc. -no hard liquor)-provided through one of our major sponsors/vendors: Pecht Distributors (Anheuser-Busch products).
- It is a major fundraiser for DFA.
- Family friendly event that also serves to market Downtown Businesses, sponsoring businesses; bring people to Downtown Franklin. Improves the quality of life for citizens of our community without much cost to the citizens.
 - Profits from this event enabled DFA to build permanent bathrooms, concession stand and storage facilities adjacent to the Barrett's Landing Park.

Who: Who is the event for --who participates? Who typically attends and how many?

- Participants: Volunteers; business & vendor sponsors; citizens
- Attendees: All ages (newborns -90+); all genders, races, and backgrounds from the City of Franklin and surrounding communities. We even have people attend from a sizable distance.
- Attendance over the past 10 years has averaged between 600-800.

When: When is the event? How and why was this date chosen and important?

- Every Thursday night from 6-10 pm. May through the end of August
- Thursdays chosen because it was payday at the Union Camp (International Paper) Mill; and Bands typically charge lower rates on Thursdays.

Where: Where is the event held? Is it within the district? If not, how is the district impacted or benefited?

- 300 S. Main Street at Barrett's Landing Park located in our Downtown Historic District along the Scenic Blackwater River.

Why: Why is this event important or strategic to the community, the organization, and/or participants?

- Brings people to Downtown Franklin that would normally not visit Franklin, as well as brings businesses, community, etc. together as one as well as exposes the community to the Franklin Area.
- As a free admissions event. It provides a wonderful activity for a lot of families that cannot afford much of anything else to do for family entertainment.

How: Describe partnerships and logistics considerations. Describe any sponsorships, budget and planning efforts.

- City of Franklin Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and Electric departments provide in-kind services for part of maintenance, set up and venue.
- Annual support and coordination with Birdsong Peanuts (large warehousing operation that borders event venue).
- Planning utilizes staff, all four committees and their volunteers – to coordinate bands, sponsors, venues, materials, City in-kind support, etc. these efforts begin in the fall of the previous event year and continue through the start of the season while orchestrating all other DFA events and activities.
- The success and longevity of the event has been attributed to the commitment of the DFA Board & organization (volunteers & Staff), City cooperation, partnerships and support, and funding from sponsors & vendors and of course the appeal/participation of our citizens and community.
- Example of budget: In 2016, there was a new strategy that incorporated annual corporate sponsors and individual band sponsors with an expanded band base. In 2017, this strategic plan evolved into one of our best seasons ever for the DFA. (Allocated in our approved 2017 budget was \$38,500 in revenue vs. \$35,000 in expenses)
Actual revenues were ~ \$63,800 and expenses were ~\$41,900 for a net profit ~\$21,900!



LEAP FORWARD FRANKLIN